



Underground

Where does a person find the biggest network of underground caverns in the United States? New Mexico hosts the Carlsbad Caverns National Park. This park located 750 feet below the surface and contains rock formations that would blow a person's mind away.

This national park has cool rock formations like the Chandelier, the Doll's Theater. These rock creations are types of stalactites and stalagmites, which are formed by water containing calcium leaking the caverns. Eventually the water evaporates and the calcium collects into massive formations. Stalactites hang from the ceiling looking like icicles hanging from the cave's ceiling. Stalagmites build up from the cave's floor to form massive stone-like structures. These formations can take millions of years to take shape but can be destroyed with the slightest push. Stalagmites and Stalactites are only part of the park's rich history.

Its amazingly rich history started in the cold, bitter Ice Ages. In the Ice Age, prehistoric animals like jaguars, llamas, and camels explored the caverns. Their story was uncovered with fossil remains found deep underground. Following the Ice Age, Native Americans wrote on the mouth of the twisting caverns. To protect the animals and Native Americans history it became a national park on May 14, 1940.

Now, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, located in New Mexico, is a definite must see for any adventuring person. For a spelunker there are 110+ limestone caverns that stretch over 23 miles. The Visitor Center (the gateway to the underground caves) is 950 feet above the seemingly endless caverns. There is an elevator that travels 754 feet underground in 13 seconds, down to a lunchroom and the entrance to the Left Hand Tunnel along with many others.

Exploring down these tunnels, there are amazing animals. In Carlsbad Caverns there aren't bugs and rodents like the average person would expect; there are birds. The species of birds is called the Cave Swallows! This bird is outnumbered by the bats. Two species of bats are endangered, the Fringed Myotis and the Cave Myotis. There is also the Mexican Free-Tailed Bat, which is declining in population. Always remember **NEVER FEED THE BATS.**

Rock formations, rich history, and wildlife would make anyone want to go there.

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